anti- retroviral therapies are not supported by the Government in the programme because of their prohibitive costs on account of indefinite period of treatment and other supportive investigations required for monitoring the progress of the disease. However, Government has been progressively reducing the excise and customs duties on anti-retroviral drugs to make them available to HIV/AIDS patients at reasonable price.

Two-tier fee regime for new medical colleges

3517. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as a step towards privatization of medical colleges, Government have adopted two-tier fee regime for new medical colleges;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether meritless students can also be given non-subsidized seats in medical colleges; and

(d) if so, whether this will bring down the standard of future medical practitioners in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) to (c) The admission process in all private medical colleges was spelt out by the Hon'ble Supreme Court Judgement in Unnikrishnan's case, according to which at least 50% of the seats in private medical colleges are to be given on merit basis. The remaining 50% seats are filled in payment category. 15% of seats of total intake capacity of the college are carved out from the payment category to be filled up by the Management under NRI/Management quota. The upper ceilings of fee structure for merit and payment seats are fixed by the Central Government. The actual fee fixation in the colleges is done by respective State Governments. Admissions against 85% seats, which include free and payment category, are required to be filled by the competent authority of the State Government through Common Entrance Examination or otherwise. In both the categories the admission is merit based.

(d) Each and every student admitted to the medical college is required to fulfil eligibility criteria and has to undergo the full prescribed period of study, pass professional examination and undergo internship etc. The standard of future medical practitioners cannot, therefore, come down.